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17. ABSTRACT (MAX. 250 WORDS)

The potential dropout can be identified in kindergarten. His background, environment, and attitude prophesy his failure. Characteristics of potential dropouts include lack of interest, severe retardation in reading, and withdrawal tendencies.

More than 600 homes were visited by four trained social workers. Objectives were to obtain permission to place each pupil in the program and to gain insight into the families, their goals for their children, the values they place on education, and possible ways of upgrading the family through efforts in adult education.

A skeleton of the program included highly individualized, flexible instruction; individual programs; a day-by-day meaningful integration of subjects and transfer-to-life situations; and the use of a visual, concrete, direct approach.

Another facet was the subsidized job experience. Its major objective was a successful, organized, and supervised work experience for each student, designed to accomplish the objectives of on-the-job skill development.

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THE PERSONALIZED CURRICULUM PROGRAM

FLINT COMMUNITY SCHOOLS

FLINT, MICHIGAN

A cooperative project of the Mott Program and
the K-12 Division of the Flint Board of Education,
conceived to combat the Dropout Problem.

U. S. DEPARTMENT OF HEALTH, EDUCATION AND WELFARE
Office of Education

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Americans are not a homogeneous mass of humanity who look alike, live alike, think alike. Rather, we are a nation of types of individuals. Our needs and interests attract us to others with similar needs and interests. We become like clusters of individuals, blooming on the stalk that best suits our personal demands for fulfillment.

Our awareness of one another---understanding our differences as well as our similarities---has increased in recent years. The value placed on human life and the pursuit of happiness has resulted in a myriad of programs.

The frequently expressed ideal in American education is "Education for all American youth." Over the years the secondary schools of the United States have made continuous progress toward extending offerings in order to reach more youth. American education is due a great deal of credit for such valiant striving. In spite of all the noble efforts and fine work and visionary preaching, the ideal quoted above is still basically an expressed and not an implemented concept. High school remains for some students an unrealistic and threatening place mainly because the program is not suited to their needs, abilities, and goals.

Now, faced with one of the most thunderous problems, we are rallying educational forces to contend with still another segment of our population--a group so large in number, so tragic in consequence that we grope in desperation against time for a solution.

We speak of the high school dropout and potential dropout--millions of them each year. To this child, defeat and failure have become regular and expected experiences. Almost inevitable results are frustration, negative attitudes, and

poor behavior. At a most crucial point in life, this bewildered student is denied a chance to experience success and to grow in self-confidence. Such negation not only harms the child, but the whole of society suffers from his lost manpower.

All teachers know this child. He has had failing marks for the past several years. As his classmates advance, his embarrassment may turn to aggression or withdrawal. Before long, failure has made its imprint, and school has become an obstacle. If he remains in the classroom, he is a misfit, too old and ill-prepared to keep pace with his peers. If he drops out, he again is a misfit, too young and ill-prepared for the labor force.

One answer to the problem, of course, is to rid the schools of such students, and they do drop out in rather large numbers every year. Flint, however, has a conviction that a better solution--better for students and society--is to improve holding power by providing the potential dropout with appropriate opportunities based upon his current state of development.

So much has been said and written on the problem of the dropout that it hardly seems necessary or possible to add still more words to building the case or justifying the need for creating new programs. We have all been bombarded with the proliferation of terms: dropout, maladjusted, disadvantaged, and others. We have all been shocked by the statistics related to the dropout, saddened by the loss of the human potential, frightened by the social dynamite of the situation, and discouraged by the size of the task. Let us say at this point only that there is enough background, enough discussion, enough evidence to form the basis for action programs rather than further discussions.

It was on May 20, 1962, that a group of Flint school administrators designed a possible plan of action. It was at this time that the seed of the PERSONALIZED CURRICULUM PROGRAM was born. On the 22nd day of May, Frank J. Manley, associate superintendent for the Mott Program of the Flint Board of Education, relayed the Mott Foundation trustees' approval of a grant of $150,000 to conduct the experiment. The Flint Board of Education matched these funds by allowing the reduction of the pupil-teacher ratio from 30 to 1 to 15 to 1 for the youngsters in the pilot program.

School closed June 8, 1962, and the program was to have 540 boys and girls ready to begin the experiment when classes resumed September 4, 1962. Lester B. Ehrbright, director of Pupil Personnel Services for the Flint Community Schools, was designated as the person to direct the program.

The concentrated summer effort included the following:

1. Selection of pupils to be included
2. Visitation of all homes of pupils selected
3. Employment of twenty teachers
4. Selection of materials to supplement textbooks
5. Building of a basic curriculum plan

Selection of the pupils was the task of the school administration, principal, counseling staff, and classroom teacher. Selection was based upon their judgment as to which pupils were the ones who would not be around when diplomas were to be given.

Educators claim to be able to identify the potential dropout in kindergarten. They say that his background, environment, and attitude prophesy his failure. With each successive year, he or she is easier to identify, for all potential dropouts have similar characteristics. Lack of interest, anti-social behavior,

absenteeism, all indicate a serious school problem.

Although children react in different ways, the following list of characteristics (all or part) describe the potential dropout:

* Negative or hostile attitude toward teachers and school
* Severe retardation in reading; i.e., below fifth grade level
* Irregular attendance pattern
* Poor work habits and study skills
* Indifference and lack of ambition
* Disruptive classroom behavior
* Withdrawal tendencies
* Preoccupation with non-school activities
* Unacceptable personal habits
* Deficiency in basic citizenship skills

Visitation of more than 600 homes was a tremendous task. This was accomplished by four trained social workers. There were two objectives. The first was to obtain permission to place each pupil in the program. The second was to gain insight into the families, their goals for their children, the values they placed on education, and possible ways of upgrading the family through efforts in adult education.

The values of these home contacts are probably one of the most significant results of the entire experiment. This approach appears to be the only way to sell education to the families heretofore considered to be impossible to reach. In the Personalized Curriculum Program, these contacts have been maintained throughout the school year by the classroom teacher as well as by a special counselor employed expressly for this purpose.

The selection of teachers for the program was extremely important, as the students in the PCP have been selected mainly because they have not or cannot profit from the regular or standard program of studies. It seems logical to assume, therefore, the PCP must be different in method and content from the situations to which the students failed to respond previously.

1. Instruction should be highly individualized.
2. Instruction should be flexible and focused on the needs of the class.
3. An activity--or problem--centered rather than a subject-centered approach should be used primarily.
4. Individual programs should be designed to fit individual needs, without regard for any prescribed courses of study.
5. The classroom be characterized by lack of tension. There must be free discussion and considerable planning with students.
6. Although the material will be elementary in nature, it must be presented and discussed in a mature, not childish, way.
7. There must be day-by-day meaningful integration of subjects and transfer-to-life situations. Material must not be presented in a piecemeal fashion with the teacher expecting the students to pick out relationships and applications.
8. Units must be short. Abstract concepts, too much detail, and rote memorization will be avoided.
9. Textbooks have become symbols of failure for these students; hence, they have deep-seated resentment for them. Therefore, standard textbooks should be used sparingly and only after proper presentation.
10. Teachers in the PCP must begin at the students' level without criticism, condescension, or recrimination.
11. A visual, concrete, direct approach should replace the traditional lecture-textbook approach.

To teach these children, twenty teachers were recruited. Three were volunteers from the Flint school system; 17 were new teachers fresh from college. It is important to note that "green" teachers were chosen, those who had not been influenced by traditional classroom teaching. Not only were they qualified teachers, but they were men and women of great patience and understanding who felt a personal commitment toward helping these confused and embittered children.

Each teacher teaches 15 students in a two-hour block of time which is problem-oriented. At their own levels of achievement and maturity, the students learn English, mathematics, social studies, and science through the problem-solving method. Much time is spent in teaching remedial reading to provide remediation for scholastic deficiency.

The reading material has a simple language structure but a format that teases reluctant eyes to keep grasping new ideas. The multilevel materials have a high-level reading interest. For example, in exploring and studying job opportunities, the pupils read about the same subject, but on varying reading levels.

Although at times our approach may seem confusing, there are immediate as well as long-range objectives to which we are dedicated.

Because of the increasing importance of a high school education for effective citizenship and the general need for a high school diploma to secure good employment, a main objective of the PCP is:

1. To encourage students to remain in school as long as possible, ideally, until a diploma is earned.
2. Since most of the students in the PCP will be early job seekers, a second objective is:

   To introduce students to employment opportunities; help them make a smooth transition from school to the job and adjust to the world of work.

3. A youth's chance of obtaining a job are greatly enhanced if he possesses an employable skill or useful knowledge; therefore, an objective of PCP is:
   To help students acquire a mechanical skill or occupational training that will be useful in seeking a job.
4. As a consequence of repeated failure and defeat, many PCP students either have withdrawn voluntarily or have been ostracized from the normal activities of school and community; they often have inferior self-images. For this reason, another PCP objective is:
   To improve attitudes toward community and self.
5. Due to inappropriate exposures to academic work and unrealistic demands for achievement, most of these students are extremely retarded in basic skills. Therefore, an important objective of PCP is:
   To improve basic academic skills.
6. For various reasons, PCP students may be deficient in social skills; hence, the sixth objective is:
   To improve social skills; e.g., dress, appearance, manners, speech, participation.
7. Because of antagonistic attitudes developed over a period of frustrating years, some PCP students no longer can tolerate a regular classroom situation (and vice versa, teachers cannot tolerate them). Consequently, an important objective is:
   To rehabilitate alienated students to regular academic work if such subjects fit their needs.

In order to meet these objectives, the program has the following basic curriculum plan: The "curriculum" is simply that sequence of experiences which results from the interaction of teacher and pupils as they plan and carry out learning activities based upon the needs of the group.

While specific needs can be determined only after the class is organized, the general areas of responsibility of the teacher are implied in the objectives of PCP. Translated into an educational program, these objectives require that learning opportunities

learning opportunities be provided in the following categories:

1. Personal Developments
   a. Adequate self-image
   b. Wholesome attitudes
   c. Social skills

2. Vocational Orientation
   a. Job Information
   b. Preparation for job seeking
   c. Qualities of good workers
   d. Occupational training

3. Basic Citizenship Skills
   a. American heritage
   b. Responsibilities of citizens
   c. Process of government
   d. Threats to democracy

4. Basic Academic Skills
   a. Improvement of reading
   b. Practical arithmetic and mathematics
   c. Current science (descriptive)
   d. Communication skills: speech, writing, spelling, composition

Basic education or assignment of PCP students to appropriate regular classes contributes to the realization of some of the objectives. However, the direct and deliberate attack on the problems of the students is concentrated in the specially designated "core" classes with reduced pupil-teacher ratio.

Basic education refers to a particular method of organizing for learning. The distinguishing features of a core class in operation are (1) longer, uninterrupted period of time available, (2) problem or unit approach to teaching, (3) elimination of strict subject matter division, (4) multiple materials, audio-visual and printed, used as resources--in contrast to a single textbook, (5) individual and small-group diversified student activity rather than a teacher-centered situation.

Under the guidance of Dr. Arvo Lohela, curriculum coordinator, all efforts to develop and personalize programs for this type of student have been kept educationally sound, in keeping with the philosophy that subject matter is but the vehicle with which to reach the primary objective--that of creating a better self-image.

While complete evaluations must wait for the passage of more time, we can point out that the following progress has already been observed:

1. Numerous individual cases of student rehabilitation through individualized instruction and/or work experience.
2. A very noticeable growth of teachers in their capacity to understand and work with the potential dropouts.
3. Considerable accumulation of useful and appropriate teaching materials.
4. Significant improvement in the attitudes of students as measured by the observations and opinions of principals and classroom teachers.

PCP teachers have made great efforts. Theirs is not an easy task for they are pioneers in a new field of education with all of the attendant obstacles and hazards.

The entire Flint community is the Personalized Curriculum classroom, subject, of course, to the judgment of the teacher and Board of Education policies.

Students who attend only the two-hour core of study are sometimes given part-time employment, frequently with academic credit. Thus, merchants, industry, and various organizations are involved in the program.

The attitude of aware Flint residents is changing toward its dropouts. No longer are these children looked upon with disrespect or grudging tolerance. Their actions and intent are slowly earning them a new dignity. Their small but persistent successes in the basic education curriculum are elevating their opinion of themselves; children ingrained with inhibitions are becoming expressive. Their progress is not meteoric, but they are moving forward, not backward, and not standing still.

"Holding power?" That's an apt phrase for so tenuous a project. When they can be held in school, these children will learn. They can become productive, self-sufficient adults as long as we are for them--as long as we dare to break with traditional

classroom teaching and provide education on their level to meet their needs.

It's not easy. Often it's baffling and frustrating. But PCP is as new to the teachers as it is to the students. Everyone has a lot to learn.

PCP SUBSIDIZED JOB EXPERIENCE

Many young people experience a major obstacle in their development when they fail to obtain a job or fail to hold a job once they succeed in gaining employment. There are many reasons for the existence of this circumstance and a special and intensive approach to the problem needs to be taken by educators and by the community because youth problems ultimately become the problems of the community. Some young people adjust to the problem of becoming self-sufficient through their own efforts or through the efforts of friends or relatives. Most students enrolled in the Personalized Curriculum Program, however, are characterized by their inability to make this adjustment. The problem is not unique to Flint. It is a problem that is serious, enough to receive national attention from the White House and one which reaches into millions of homes across the nation. It is most serious in the urban industrialized areas; however, rural communities are feeling the pressur because of the declining demand for farm labor. Causes of the problem are related to changes in our economy and the changing aspects of our social structure. But it does no good to belabor or speculate upon the causes of the problem. The important thing is that public agencies must take steps to counteract the effect that all this has upon the young people who are hurt by the results of the changes in our economy and society.

The Personalized Curriculum Program established as one of its major objectives a successful, organized, and supervised work experience for each student who needs this kind of experience. The Flint Public Schools some years ago established a cooperative occupational training program which was designed to accomplish the objectives of on-the-job skill development. The students enrolled in this program for the most part are students who readily adjust to both a school and a work situation. The cooperative education method is quite generally accepted as the best way to bridge the gap between school and work, so why not use this approach

is quite generally accepted as the best way to bridge the gap between school and work, so why not use this approach to the problem of the less able student or the student who experiences difficulty in finding a job or holding a job? Whereas the emphasis with one kind of student is on skill training (with attitudes being somewhat secondary), it seems reasonable to use the same method in dealing with youngsters whose difficulties are primarily attitudinal and place the emphasis upon developing acceptable job attitudes, with job skills coming as a secondary or future gain based upon proper attitude.

Thus it is proposed that our experimental program in subsidized job experience for PCP students be based upon the cooperative education method, using school staff already experienced and trained in this specialty and calling upon all human resources both inside and outside the school wherever they may be found willing and able to serve.

The major idea here is to use all resources, regardless of past structure, toward the major objective of eventual self-sufficiency for each individual student.

It is anticipated that to some PCP students this objective will be accomplished (and is being accomplished) through the regular and on-going Cooperative Occupational Education Program. However, this program is subjected to the ups and downs of the economic activity of Flint and in times of stress this bears hardest upon the Personalized Curriculum student for whom there are usually fewer employment opportunities during the low period. Therefore, in order to maintain some consistency of employment and to assist the least employable Personalized Curriculum students, a method to supplement or subsidize is now being put into practice on an experimental basis. The unique features of this program are:

1. Employment of a Personalized Curriculum student by an employer selected for his sympathetic understanding of the problems of youth in general, and the problem of his individual charge; specifically, his willingness to assist the schools in the attainment of the objectives of the Personalized Curriculum Program.
2. Subsidization of the student's employment through funds provided to the Flint Board of Education by the Mott Program, according to the following plan:
   a. The pupil is "employed" 20 hours per week for a period of 10 weeks and is paid "wages" at the rate of 60¢ per hour from a fund established by the Mott Program. (During this period, the student is not an employee of the establishment. He is considered to be in a classroom away from school.)
   b. Upon completion of the 10-week period, the employer has the option of continuing the employment for another 10-week period. If this is desired, the student may become a part-time employee of the firm and the employer will add a predetermined amount of wages to the original 60¢ per hour. This may be variable in specific cases because of current wage rates in the occupation or because of minimum wage regulations.
   c. Upon completion of the second 10-week period, the employer has the option of continuing the student on the regular co-op. program. At this point, subsidization from Mott Program funds ceases. If the employer does not wish to continue into the regular co-op. program, he may elect to begin the process with a different student or elect to drop out of the program entirely.

SPECIAL PROCEDURES

1. School staff members specially certified by the Department of Public Instruction closely supervise the employment in all phases and report progress to the PCP teacher.
2. Students make periodic reports on their work experiences to the PCP class.
3. Students receive academic credit for their work experience equivalent to attendance in any other class.
4. PCP teachers devote a portion of class time to specialized instruction dealing with job problems of individual students.
5. Students, jobs, and employers are matched as closely as possible, consistent with good educational practice.
6. If it is determined that the educational objectives of the Personalized Curriculum Program are not being attained in a specific case, the employment may be terminated.

PROJECTIONS FOR 1963-64

Plans for the Personalized Curriculum Program for the current year were formulated after careful evaluation by all those who have had a part in the development of the program. This included students, teachers, staff members, and citizens in the community. Much valuable guidance was received from the Seven Inter-University Planning Committee.

Additional effort and emphasis are being directed to three specific areas:

1. Reading development for both the individual student and the Personalized Curriculum teacher.
2. Group work and intensive counseling for that part of the group needing immediate help.
3. Home visitation and community contacts.

The area of reading development is of prime importance. The low reading level of most of the youth in the program was evident from the start. Experience during the first year has served only to emphasize this problem. Secondary teachers feel greatly the need for inservice training to do the job they sincerely wish to do. A highly qualified person in the field was added to the staff in September 1963. This person serves as an instructor in the seminar which started in September. The seminar operates as a workshop for Personalized Curriculum teachers to develop their techniques and strengthen their efforts in the teaching of reading in the classroom. This effort will be of great value to both the individual student as well as the teachers in the program.

The staff found that many youth of this type are badly in need of constant, as well as intensive, help with their personal problems. This need is apparent in both the home and school as well as on the job or work experience that might

be planned. Present plans include the employment of one other full-time person to work with an individual already on the staff to do an intensive job in this area.

An effective relationship has been maintained by staff members, not only with the families of the youth involved in the program, but also with people in the community who have provided valuable job and work experience.

The first year of the program operated intentionally without any designed research. A sound research pattern is now being developed to show what has been accomplished, as well as to indicate the values available in the approach that personalizes the educational experiences for this type of youth.

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